

TITLE: METHOD FOR PRACTICING PUTTING AND APPARATUS THEREFOR

INVENTOR: EARL H. BULLOCK

5

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION

This application claims the filing benefit under 35 U.S.C. §119(e) of U.S. Provisional
10 Application No. 60/462,539, filed 04/14/2003, which is included herein by reference.

TECHNICAL FIELD

15 The present invention pertains generally to the game of golf, and more particularly to a practice putting pad and method which are utilized to improve a golfer's putting skill.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

20

Putting is an essential element of the game of golf. By improving putting performance a golfer may take a significant number of strokes off of his or her game. As such golfers utilize a variety of putting aids to improve their putting skill. For example, U.S. Patent 5,531,446 shows a putting aid for a golf putter which comprises an elongated rod and a
25 generally spherical end member mounted on the rod. The rod is adapted to be slidably inserted through an opening in the end of the grip of the putter. The distance of the end member from the grip is adjusted so that the end member contacts the body of a golfer when he assumes his putting stance. The portion of the end member which contacts a golfer's body has relatively low friction so that the end member moves relative to the body if the proper putting stroke is
30 not used.

U.S. Patent 5,628,694 illustrates a training aid which assists golfers in their efforts to better master the art of putting. One component of the invention is a foldable rug that has light colored markings on its top side. The markings in the vicinity of one end of the rug consist of three parallel lines. The two outside lines are equidistant from the centerline which is co-

5 extensive with the long central axis of symmetry of the rug. The two outside lines are much shorter than the center line which center line runs virtually the length of the rug and ends up touching a circle marked on the rug's top side in the vicinity of the other end of the rug. The center of the circle lies on what would be an extension of the light colored center line on the top surface of the rug which is itself typically dark colored, i.e., dark green. The marked circle

10 functions as an artificial golf cup etched on the rug, an artificial golf green. The second component, a putter component consists of a shaft affixed to the top of a hollowed out putter head. The putter head is rectangular in shape with depth and a hollow rectangularly shaped center hole. At the base of the center hole are each of three thin bars extending from the inner aspect of one side of the putter head to the inner aspect of the other side. The shaft is bowed at

15 near where it is affixed to the top of the putter head. An imaginary extension of the shaft from just above where it begins to bow, if visualized in a golfer's mind's eye when the golfer rests the putter head flat on the top side of the rug during proper use thereof such that the three bars at the base of the putter head cover exactly the three lines earmarked on the top side of the rug; will be seen to pass through the center point of the middle one of the three bars. Also, on the

20 topside of each lateral section of the putter head are two etched co-planar lines with, each one parallel with and co-extensive with the lie of the middle one of the three bars. Also, each lateral center face of the putter head is milled to a roughened texture so as to render each center face amenable to appropriately gripping into the dimples of a golf ball on the top side of the rug just in front of the putter. Moreover, in view of the symmetry and identity of shape of each

25 such face, the putter component can be utilized by either a left handed or right handed. A golfer utilizing the invention lines up a practice putt as noted above, brings the putter back in such a manner that the bars always cover the lines below the bars, then brings it forward into the ball with the bars still covering the lines and after impacting the ball follows through with the bars still covering the lines. Repetition of the foregoing stroking technique promotes

30 muscle memory regarding the optimally proper way to stroke a putter on a natural golf green

where the putter component alone can be utilized in putting while utilizing the above-mentioned two etched lines as directional aides.

U.S. Patent 5,630,719 discloses a golf putting teaching aid which includes a putting surface that has disposed thereon a cup near one end and a number of patterns disposed along the length thereof. Each of the patterns has parallel lines aligned with the desired putting path, the two parallel lines being separated by a predetermined distance, preferably the width of a typical golf ball. The length of the two parallel lines in each of the patterns increases as the pattern is moved away from the cup. At a predetermined location along each of the two parallel lines in each of the patterns, a ball location area is defined. The golf ball is disposed at this location and then the club first aligned with the ball such that the face thereof is perpendicular to the desired path of travel and then moved back to the most distal end from the cup. Thereafter, it is moved from the most distal end to the most proximal end in an accelerated motion with the ball location being selected such that optimal acceleration of the club head will be present at the contact point to the ball. Perpendicular squaring lines may also be disposed on the putting surface to aid in orienting the club head. Each of the patterns allows the golfer both a visual aid to maintain the face of the club constant along the desired path of travel, and, also, allows the acceleration to be set as a function of the distance from the cup.

U.S. Patent 6,056,645 comprises a portable practice putting green having a first flexible layer. A second flexible layer is molded onto the first flexible layer to form a plurality of inflatable chambers therebetween. A third flexible layer is bonded onto the second flexible layer. The third flexible layer has a hole to receive a golf ball putted therein. The first flexible layer, second flexible layer and third flexible layer can be rolled up together to be conveniently placed into storage and safely transported.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention is directed to a portable practice putting pad which can be used
5 both indoors and outdoors on an actual practice putting green. The practice putting pad helps a
golfer learn to keep the putter face square throughout the entire putting stroke, and may be
used either with or without a golf ball. The practice putting pad is thin so that it may be rolled
up, placed in a small cylindrical container, and stored in a pocket or purse. Because of its
construction, after being rolled up, even for a prolonged period, the practice putting pad will
10 always roll out into a flat configuration. In an embodiment of the invention, the practice
putting pad is green with white lines, white lettering, and a white golf ball positioning circle.

In accordance with a preferred embodiment of the invention, a practice putting pad for
aligning the head of a putter the head having a toe, a heel, a length between the toe and the
heel, and a face, the practice putting pad comprising:

15 a flexible sheet having a surface and a longitudinal axis;
a putter toe line disposed upon the surface parallel to the longitudinal axis;
a putter heel line disposed upon the surface parallel to the longitudinal axis; and,
the putter toe line spaced apart from the putter heel line by about the length of the
putter head.

20

In accordance with an aspect of the invention, the putter toe line has an outside
boundary, and the putter heel line has an outside boundary. The perpendicular distance
between the outside boundary of the putter toe line and the outside boundary of the putter heel
line being about five inches.

25

In accordance with another aspect of the invention, the sheet has a thickness of no
greater than one sixteenth of an inch, wherein the practice putting pad may be rolled up along
its longitudinal axis into a cylindrical shape having a diameter no greater than one and one half
inches.

30

In accordance with another aspect of the invention, the sheet has a length of about 26 inches and a width of about five and one half inches.

5 In accordance with another aspect of the invention, a circle having a diameter which is approximately that of a golf ball is disposed upon the surface of the sheet; and,
a centerline is disposed upon the surface parallel to the longitudinal axis, the centerline equidistant between the putter toe line and the putter heel line.

10 In accordance with another aspect of the invention, a first reference line is disposed upon the surface parallel to the longitudinal axis, the first reference line positioned between the centerline and the putter toe line; and,
a second reference line is disposed upon the surface parallel to the longitudinal axis, the second reference line positioned between the centerline and the putter heel line.

15 In accordance with another aspect of the invention, the sheet is fabricated from a layer of soft polyester fabric backed with a layer of open cell rubber, so that the practice putting pad may be rolled up along the longitudinal axis into a cylindrical shape and may then be unrolled wherein the sheet will lay flat upon a support surface.

20 Other aspects of the present invention will become apparent from the following detailed description, taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, which illustrate, by way of example, the principles of the invention.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a top plan view of a practice putting pad in accordance with the present
5 invention;

FIG. 2 is a side elevation view of the practice putting pad;

FIG. 3 is an exploded perspective view of the practice putting pad stored in a
cylindrical container;

FIG. 4. is a top plan view of a golf ball placed upon the practice putting pad with a
10 putter head placed in an address position;

FIG. 5 is a top plan view of the putter head moved back;

FIG. 6 is a top plan view of the putter head moved forward after striking the golf ball;
and,

FIG. 7 is a view of a left handed golfer in an address position.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

5

Referring initially to FIGs. 1 and 2, there are illustrated top plan and side elevation views respectively of a practice putting pad in accordance with the present invention generally designated as 20. Practice putting pad 20 is utilized to properly align the head 600 of a putter throughout the entire putting stroke, wherein the head 600 of the putter has a toe 602, a heel 604, a length LH between the toe 602 and the heel 604, and a face 606 which strikes a golf ball 700 (refer also to FIG. 4). Practice putting pad 20 includes a flexible sheet 22 having a surface 24, a longitudinal axis 26, and a thickness T of no greater than one sixteenth of an inch.

10

A putter toe line 32 is disposed upon surface 24 parallel to longitudinal axis 26, and a putter heel line 34 disposed upon surface 24 parallel to longitudinal axis 26. In an embodiment of the invention, putter toe line 34 and putter heel line 36 are about one quarter of an inch wide. Putter toe line 32 and putter heel line 34 have outside boundaries 36 and 38 respectively. A perpendicular distance D (perpendicular to longitudinal axis 26) between outside boundary 36 of putter toe line 32 and outside boundary 38 of putter heel line 34 is about five inches, which is about length LH of putter head 600 (refer to FIG. 4). As such, putter head 600 may be placed upon surface 24 of practice putting pad 20 so that the toe 602 of putter head 600 resides on or near putter toe line 32 and the heel of putter head 600 resides on or near putter heel line 34 (refer to FIG. 4). In the shown embodiment putter toe line 32 and putter heel line 34 are broken by indicia, PUTTER TOE and PUTTER HEEL respectively, however the broken lines may be mentally extended through the indicia by the golfer.

20

In an embodiment of the invention, sheet 22 has a length L of about 26 inches and a width W of about five and one half inches. A circle 40 of about the diameter of a golf ball 700 is disposed upon surface 24 of sheet 22, the center of circle 40 defining a ball positioning point 42. Circle 40 serves as a guide when placing a golf ball 700 upon surface 24 (refer to FIG. 4). Also, a centerline 44 is disposed upon surface 24 parallel to longitudinal axis 26, wherein centerline 44 is equidistant between said putter toe line 32 and said putter heel line 34. A first

25

30

reference line 46 is disposed upon surface 24 parallel to longitudinal axis 26, first reference line 46 positioned between centerline 44 and putter toe line 32, and a second reference line 48 is disposed upon surface 24 parallel to longitudinal axis 26, second reference line 48 positioned between centerline 44 and putter heel line 34. Centerline 44, first reference line 46,
5 and second reference line 48 can also be used by the golfer to keep the face 606 of the putter head 600 square during the back and fore strokes. In the shown embodiment two sets (left and right) of centerline 44, first reference line 46 and second reference line 48 are provided.

In an embodiment of the invention, sheet 22 is fabricated from a layer of soft polyester fabric 28 backed with a layer of open cell rubber 30, so that practice putting pad 20 may be
10 rolled up along longitudinal axis 26 into a cylindrical shape (refer to FIG. 3) and may then be unrolled wherein sheet 22 will lay absolutely flat upon a support surface 500 such as a floor, a carpet, or a practice putting green. Such a material is available from DIGISPEC, Inc. of Las Vegas, NV, and is marketed under the trade name "Origin'L Fabric". The various line and other indicia (such as PRACTICE PUTTING PAD) marked upon surface 24 are marked upon
15 the fabric surface 24 using a Dye Sublimation process.

Now referring to FIG. 3, there is illustrated an exploded perspective view of practice putting pad 20 stored in a cylindrical container 80, wherein practice putting pad 20 and container 80 comprise a system 50 for practicing putting. Cylindrical storage container 80 has a length LC of about six inches and a diameter DC of about one and one half inches, wherein
20 practice putting pad 20 may be rolled up along longitudinal axis 26 into a cylindrical shape and placed inside cylindrical storage container 80. As such, practice putting system 50 is highly portable and may be conveniently carried in the pocket, purse, or golf bag of a user. This packaging feature of the present invention is made possible by the thickness T of no greater than one sixteenth of an inch, which allows practice putting pad 20 to be rolled up along
25 longitudinal axis 26 into a cylindrical shape having a diameter no greater than one and one half inches.

FIG. 4. is a top plan view of a golf ball 700 placed upon circle 40 (refer to FIG. 1) of practice putting pad 20 with a putter head 600 placed in an address position wherein face 606 is close to but not touching golf ball 700. In the address position, face 606 of putter head 600
30 is perpendicular to putter toe line 32 and putter heel line 34, and is placed a predetermined

distance DA behind ball positioning point 42. Predetermined distance DA is typically about one inch (slightly greater than one half of the one and five eighths inch diameter of golf ball 700). "Behind ball positioning point 42" means that face 606 is about one inch away from ball positioning point 42 in a direction opposite to the direction of ball travel.

5 FIG. 5 is a top plan view of putter head 600 moved back in a back stroke.

FIG. 6 is a top plan view of putter head 600 moved forward after striking golf ball 700 in a fore stroke.

FIG. 7 is a view of a left handed golfer in an address position. The present invention may be used by both right and left handed golfers.

10

In terms of use, a method for practicing putting includes:

(a) providing a putter having a head 600 having a toe 602, a heel 604, a length LH between toe 602 and heel 604, and a face 606; (refer to FIG. 4)

(b) providing a practice putting pad 20 including: (refer to FIG. 1 and FIG. 4)

15 -a flexible sheet 22 having a surface 24, a longitudinal axis 26, a back end 27, a front end 29;
 -a putter toe line 32 disposed upon surface 24 parallel to longitudinal axis 26;
 -a putter heel line 34 disposed upon surface 24 parallel to longitudinal axis 26;
 -putter toe line 32 spaced apart from putter heel line 34 by about length LH of
20 putter head 600;

(c) providing a support surface 700 such as a floor, a carpet, the ground, or a putting green; (refer to FIG. 2)

(d) placing practice putting pad 20 upon support surface 700;

(e) positioning putter head 600 upon surface 24 so that face 606 is perpendicular to
25 putter toe line 32 and putter heel line 34;

(f) moving putter head 600 back to back end 27 while keeping face 606 perpendicular to putter toe line 32 and putter heel line 34; (refer to FIG. 5)

(g) moving putter head 600 forward to front end 29 while keeping face 606 perpendicular to putter toe line 32 and putter heel line 34; (refer to FIG. 6) and,

30 (h) repeating steps (e) through (g) a plurality of times.

It is noted that practice putting pad 20 may be used with or without a golf ball 700.

The method further including:

5 providing a golf ball 700; and,

in step (b), a circle 40 having a diameter approximately equal to that of a golf ball disposed upon surface 24; and,

prior to step (e), placing golf ball 700 upon surface 24 at circle 40 so that golf ball 700 will be struck by face 606 during step (g). (refer to FIGs. 4-6)

10

The method further including:

in step (c), support surface 24 being a golf putting green; and,

after step (g), observing that when golf ball 700 leaves practice putting pad 20 the path of golf ball 700 is not altered.

15

The method further including:

in step (b), putter toe line 32 having an outside boundary 36, putter heel line 34 having an outside boundary 38, and a perpendicular distance D between outside boundary 36 of putter toe line 32 and outside boundary 38 of putter heel line 34 being about five inches. (refer to

20 FIG. 1)

The method further including:

in step (b), sheet 22 having a length L of about 26 inches, a width W of about five and one half inches, and a thickness T of no greater than one sixteenth of an inch. (refer to FIGs. 1

25 and 2)

6. The method of Claim 5, further including:

providing a cylindrical storage container 80 having a length LC of about six inches and a DC of about one and one half inches; and,

after step (h), rolling practice putting pad 20 up along longitudinal axis 26 into a cylindrical shape and placing practice putting pad 20 inside cylindrical storage container 80. (refer to FIG. 3)

5 The method further including:

in step (b), a circle 40 disposed upon surface 24, said circle and centered at ball positioning point 42, circle 40 having a diameter approximately equal to that of a golf ball 700; and,

10 a centerline 44 disposed upon surface 24 parallel to longitudinal axis 26, centerline 44 equidistant between putter toe line 32 and putter heel line 34. (refer to FIG. 1)

The method further including:

15 in step (b), a first reference line 46 disposed upon surface 24 parallel to longitudinal axis 26, first reference line 46 positioned between centerline 44 and putter toe line 32, and a second reference line 48 disposed upon surface 24 parallel to longitudinal axis 26, second reference line 48 positioned between centerline 44 and putter heel line 34. (refer to FIG. 1)

20 The preferred embodiments of the invention described herein are exemplary and numerous modifications, variations, and rearrangements can be readily envisioned to achieve an equivalent result, all of which are intended to be embraced within the scope of the appended claims.